News Releases - 2007

Playwright Judith Thompson wins Walter Carsen Prize for Excellence in the Performing Arts

Ottawa, August 7, 2007 – The Canada Council for the Arts announced today that playwright Judith Thompson is the winner of the 2007 Walter Carsen Prize for Excellence in the Performing Arts. The $50,000 prize, administered and presented by the Canada Council for the Arts, recognizes the highest level of artistic excellence and distinguished career achievement by Canadian artists who have spent the major part of their career in Canada in theatre, dance or music.

Presented for the first time in 2001, the Walter Carsen Prize for Excellence in the Performing Arts was created as a result of a generous donation of $1.1 million to the Canada Council by Toronto businessman and philanthropist Walter Carsen, O.C. The prize is normally awarded annually on a four-year cycle: dance, theatre, dance, music. Previous prize winners include choreographer David Earle, composer R. Murray Schafer, principal dancer/producer-director Veronica Tennant, playwright John Murrell, and choreographer/director Brian Macdonald.

Judith Thompson was selected by a peer assessment committee consisting of Raymond Cloutier, actor, broadcaster and director of the Conservatoire d'art dramatique de Montréal; Michelle St. John, actor and artistic director (Toronto); and Jerry Wasserman, actor, playwright, critic and professor of English and Theatre at the University of British Columbia. In awarding the prize to Ms. Thompson, the committee said:

"Possessed of one of the most dynamic and unique theatrical voices anywhere, Judith Thompson has created a corpus of plays of singular power and originality over the past quarter-century. This Canadian visionary, whose often disturbing work never leaves audiences unmoved, continues to break new ground even as her plays are produced, anthologized, and honoured across the nation and the world. Along with her significant achievements in writing for stage, film and radio, she is increasingly influential as a theatre director, educator and mentor. Judith Thompson has sustained artistic excellence across a distinguished career with the promise of more to come and is a worthy recipient of the Walter Carsen Prize."

The prize will be presented to Judith Thompson in the fall of 2007. Photos of Ms. Thompson can be downloaded from the Canada Council image gallery.

Judith Thompson

Born in 1954 in Montreal, Judith Thompson grew up in Connecticut and Kingston, Ontario, graduated from Queen's University, and then attended the National Theatre School of Canada, graduating from the

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Acting Program, where she began to write monologues in a mask class. Those monologues became *The Crackwalker*, which was followed by *White Biting Dog*, *I Am Yours*, *Lion in the Streets*, *Sled*, *Perfect Pie*, *Habitat*, *Enoch Arden in the Hope Shelter*, and *Palace of the End*. She has written two feature films, *Lost and Delirious*, and *Perfect Pie*, and numerous radio plays. She has twice won the Governor General's Literary Award for Drama, as well as two Chalmers Awards, the Toronto Arts Award, the Canadian Author's Association Award, the Nellie Award, the Prix Italia, an honorary doctor of Divinity degree from Thornloe University and the University of Guelph Distinguished Professor Award. She was recently appointed an Officer of the Order of Canada.

General information

In addition to its principal role of promoting and fostering the arts in Canada, the Canada Council for the Arts, which is celebrating its 50th anniversary in 2007, administers and awards prizes and fellowships to close to 200 artists and scholars annually in the arts, humanities, social sciences, natural sciences, health sciences and engineering. Among these are the Killam Prizes, the Killam Research Fellowships, the Canada Council for the Arts Molson Prizes, the Governor General's Literary Awards and the Governor General's Awards in Visual and Media Arts.

For more information about these awards, including nomination procedures, contact Janet Riedel Pigott, Acting Director, Endowments and Prizes, at 613-566-4414 or 1-800-263-5588, ext. 5041; or Danielle Sarault, Acting Program Officer, Endowments and Prizes, at 613-566-4414 or 1-800-263-5588, ext. 4116.

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